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SUBJECT: GONL EXPECTS RATIFICATION OF U.S.-EU GPS-GALILEO
AGREEMENT SOON

REF: STATE 19459

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1. (SBU) EconOffs met April 17 with Wim Ploeg, European Division Deputy Head, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, to ascertain the ratification status of the U.S.-EU GPS-Galileo Cooperation Agreement. Ploeg, who coordinates the GONL's interagency "Galileo group," said that he expected the Dutch Parliament to ratify the agreement "quite soon." He described the ratification delay as a "hiccup" attributable to the lack of urgency after signing the agreement in 2004 and the limited GONL staff time dedicated to the Galileo project. When pressed, Ploeg said he expected Parliament to ratify the agreement in three or four months. He added that he was currently preparing responses to Parliament's questions, such as concern about liability issues once Galileo is operational (i.e., who would be liable for commercial losses if the system goes down or provides inaccurate information).

2. (SBU) Looking ahead, Ploeg said that Galileo's implementation is now on track and a late 2012 operational date was feasible. The cost to implement the system should be clear by the end of 2008, he added, and the GONL was opposed to spending more than EUR 3.4 billion. He said the GONL would insist that additional funds, if necessary, come from the existing EU budget. Ploeg concluded that the biggest remaining obstacles to Galileo would be the political fallout of any cost overruns and the risk of contract non-performance by industry partners.

Gallagher